

Ladders are tools. Many of the basic safety rules that apply to most tools also apply to the safe use of a ladder:

- If you feel tired or dizzy, or are prone to losing your balance, stay off the ladder.
- Wear clean slip-resistant shoes. Shoes with leather soles are not appropriate for ladder use since they are not considered sufficiently slip resistant.
- Before using a ladder, inspect it to confirm it is in good working condition.
- Ladders with loose or missing parts must be rejected. Rickety ladders that sway or lean to the side must be rejected.
- The ladder you select must be the right size for the job.
- The Duty Rating of the ladder must be greater than the total weight of the climber, tools, supplies, and other objects placed upon the ladder. The length of the ladder must be sufficient so that the climber does not have to stand on the top rung or step.
- When the ladder is set-up for use, it must be placed on firm level ground and without any type of slippery condition present at either the base or top support points.
- Only one person at a time is permitted on a ladder unless the ladder is specifically designed for more than one climber (such as a Trestle Ladder).
- Ladders must not be placed in front of closed doors that can open toward the ladder. The door must be blocked open, locked, or guarded.
- Read the safety information labels on the ladder. The on-product safety information is specific to the particular type of ladder on which it appears. The climber is not considered qualified or adequately trained to use the ladder until familiar with this information.

When climbing a ladder, it is safest to utilize Three Points-of-Contact because it minimizes the chances of slipping and falling from the ladder. At all times during ascent, descent, and working, the climber must face the ladder and have two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand in contact with the ladder steps, rungs and/or side rails. In this way, the climber is not likely to become unstable in the event one limb slips during the climb. It is important to note that the climber must not carry any objects in either hand that can interfere with a firm grip on the ladder. Otherwise, Three Points-of-Contact with the ladder cannot be adequately maintained and the chance of falling is increased in the event a hand or foot slip occurs.

Off the Job Safety for Ladders:

I have always taught and trained workers that the most dangerous tool in their home garage is a ladder, especially one that is not in good working order or isn't the right ladder for the job task.

Personal Story:

Back in my early career as a safety professional with the DuPont Company I was performing a home task of cleaning the leaves out of my gutter on a Saturday morning. Back then my male testosterone was stronger than my mind and training. I found myself stepping on the top step of my 6 foot Step Ladder to reach the top of the gutter with my hand, rather than utilizing a taller (10 foot ladder) that was in my garage.

Here is the lesson learned: My immediate supervisor just so happened to drive by and observed what I was doing standing on the top step of the ladder. He waited until I was back on the ground so as to not startle me while on the ladder. Once I was on the ground, he rolled down his car window and said "good morning Herb, I hope you are having a good morning and working safely". I remember those words like it was yesterday. I thought to myself, he will probably fire me on Monday morning. On Monday morning he simply stated the following: "You are a good man Herb, and I am glad you are here in one piece today. I am sure you have learned a sincere lesson on ladder safety this weekend"? He taught me a life long lesson! Since that day, I have been a STRONG advocate for ladder safety both on the job and off the job at home!

There is an old saying I learned working for DuPont back in those early days: "You are safer working at the plant than you are working at home". DO NOT take chances at home that you would not take on the job!